

Farage: AV is the thin of the wedge, that`s why we support it

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Nigel Farage is in a bullish mood. Buoyed by the coalition's unpopularity, Labour's listlessness and the success of the True Finns Party, he has declared that Ukip is "no longer a minority party". I interviewed him ahead of tomorrow's local election, the first test of his second leadership stint and the new direction in which he is trying to take the party. You can read the full interview as a web exclusive here; and there are some highlights from the transcript below:

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On AV

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DB: Why are you supporting AV?

NF: Well, first past the post is finished, it doesn't work.

DB: Why?

NF: It doesn't really have legitimacy. You know, it worked when we were a two party state. I completely lost faith in it in 2005 when Blair was returned with a 60 seat majority on 36 per cent of the vote, or 22 per cent if you factor in low turnout. I'd always argued that we needed FPTP because it gave us strong government and we mustn't become like Italy. 2005 put a torpedo through that for me. It's bust.

DB: Are you doing it to engage younger voters, to an extent?

NF: Certainly, the new generation coming through have different attitudes to the system. They think, what's the point? I would prefer AV Plus, which would retain the constituency link and then also the second ballot ensured there were no wasted votes. Why do we support AV? Basically if the no side wins, then I think that's the end of reform.

DB: So AV is the thin end of the wedge?

NF: I see AV as being a crack in the damn. Once you've changed something once, you can change it again. I also think that from the Ukip perspective, which is of secondary importance, it kills the wasted vote argument in a second.

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